

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER

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MEMORANDUM

CUBA-US: Possible Pressure Tactics

Summary

During the next several months, Castro may attempt to resume the refugee exodus or devise new schemes meant to force the US into formal bilateral talks on his terms. The Cuban leader has a variety of options at his disposal; some are potent, most have inherent risks.

Refugee-Related Tactics

At the lower end of the risk spectrum in this category, Castro's alternatives include:

- Attempt to maintain a steady flow of refugees that eventually will exceed US tolerance. Castro may estimate that an average of about 1,000-1,500 new refugees per week would strain US resistance over a prolonged period. (About 900 arrived in Key West during the week of 22-28 June.) Such a departure rate could be achieved using only two to four boats per day.
- Attempt to generate political pressure in the US exile community for renewal of the boatlift on a larger scale or for an airlift arranged through negotiations. This

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could be accomplished by convincing the exiles that Cuba was prepared to permit an airlift but Washington was not unless subjected to political pressure.

- Sell or otherwise provide Cuban-owned boats to the exiles to bring refugees to the United States. If Castro chose this option, the vessels most likely would be small or barely seaworthy. The Cubans would expect that these boats would be seized on arrival in Florida. In 1965, when Castro opened the port of Camarioca to individuals wishing to go to the US, he offered to lend boats to the exiles to ferry their friends and relatives back to the United States. He also offered to house and feed exiles without charge for two days while they waited for their passengers.
- Attempt to bypass the US cordon sanitaire in the Florida Strait by opening different Cuban ports to a resumption of the boatlift. Barlovento, Cojimar, Matanzas, Caibarien, Isabela de Sagua, and Cardenas--all situated along the northern coast--are some of the more likely possibilities.
- Try to attract small boats from Puerto Rico by opening some ports in eastern Cuba. The use of ports in central and eastern Cuba would facilitate the departure of potential refugees living outside Havana. About 90 percent of the 115,000 already in the United States were residents of the Havana area.
- Encourage attempts by Cuban exiles to obtain large freighters, capable of carrying 1,000-4,000 refugees. (A large number of barely seaworthy vessels are available in the area.)
- Initiate an airlift of refugees by private aircraft. On 25 April, Cuban officials announced that private aircraft would be allowed to pick up refugees at Veradero airport if this were done "in an orderly fashion and planes sent with advance notice." Havana rescinded the offer within 24 hours, claiming it was having too many difficulties processing the refugees through Mariel.

-- Remove the guards from another Embassy in Havana. This would produce another situation such as occurred at the Peruvian Embassy, forcing negotiations regarding the disposition of those who sought refuge. If Castro undertook to generate such an incident, he would calculate that the United States would be unable to avoid being drawn into the negotiations. The Venezuelan Embassy is the most logical target.

Related tactics that carry higher levels of risk include:

- Encourage a large refugee influx into the US Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay, thereby undermining base security and focusing international attention on a major bone of contention between Havana and Washington. If US military personnel were under orders not to shoot, the potential refugees could breach the US fence line and occupy the northern sections of the base. Minefields farther south probably would hinder refugees from occupying the more developed parts of the base, but Castro's purpose would be to place the United States in the position of having to choose between: 1) a forcible expulsion of the refugees which would probably cause some deaths and injuries; 2) granting refugee status and transporting them to the US; 3) taking no action and in effect ceding this portion of the base to the Cubans. Some refugees might also attempt to enter the base using rafts or small boats in order to circumvent the minefields and US defensive positions.
- Remove the guards from USINT. Although the US Interests Section does not have large Embassy grounds similar to the Peruvian facility, Castro could create a "special zone" around the building and announce that all persons wishing to leave for the United States need only go to the US Interests Section. Such a maneuver could, in effect, trap US officials and the 344 Cuban asylees in the building.

Other Pressure Tactics

Havana could attempt to exert pressure on the United States in ways not directly associated with the refugee exodus. Tactics having relatively lower risks include:

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- Increase propaganda attacks on the United States. Cuba could choose to raise the issues of Guantanamo, the trade embargo, or US overflights in the UN General Assembly and other international forums.
- Pursue the question of Puerto Rican independence more aggressively. This could include sponsorship of additional UN resolutions and increased political support to the independence movement.
- Strictly enforce air traffic regulations governing the several air corridors over Cuba that serve as major channels for aircraft flying between the United States and Latin America.

A comprehensive effort could seriously disrupt air traffic using the Cuban corridors.

- Undertake much harsher treatment of US prisoners in Cuba. This would be designed to generate political and bureaucratic pressures on the US administration to gain better treatment for the prisoners.
- Strictly enforce access to Cuban territorial waters. This could include seizure of all US registered boats violating Cuban waters or those within a few miles of Cuban waters. Detention of the crews and passengers could be prolonged considerably by a variety of bureaucratic and legal mechanisms.
- Escalate tensions at USINT. This could be achieved by cutting off water, electricity, and other utility services or by threatening harsh punishment of the more than 300 Cuban asylees still remaining in the building.

Alternatives that have higher risks include:

- Attempt to shoot down an SR-71 reconnaissance aircraft. Castro on several occasions in public has stated Cuba's right to fire on the SR-71 aircraft. The probability of success, however, is very low.

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-- Create an incident at the Guantanamo Naval Base by violating treaty provisions governing navigation through the base. (International commercial traffic regularly transits the base on the way to and from the Cuban ports of Boqueron and Caimanera.) The treaty forbids passage of "armed" Cuban vessels without permission from US authorities.



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